

Government Reform

As a member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, the main investigative body in the U.S. House of Representatives, I focus on reducing waste, fraud and abuse in government while increasing efficiency, transparency and ways to make government work for its citizens.

We live in the greatest nation on earth, but we have room for much improvement and should focus on what taxpayers get for their money.

Measuring the Federal Budget

As every good business person knows, if you can't measure it, you can't manage it.

The most important financial document of the federal government is the Consolidated Financial Report of the United States Government. It's the best picture of the nation's financial well-being because it includes liabilities like Medicare and Social Security that are the country's "credit card" for future payment. It's published every year, yet most citizens and Members of Congress don't even know it exists.

In 2006, I wrote a forward to the Financial Report which was published, along with the full report text, and available in bookstores across America. It never made the best-seller list and I think that's unfortunate because everyone should know this information.

On March 9, the OGR committee held a hearing to focus on this year's financial report, and once again I discussed the need for everyone to read this important document. You can watch a video of my comments at the hearing [here](#).

This annual report includes a user-friendly summary called the Citizens' Guide and I encourage everyone to read it.

Transparency in Redistricting

Redistricting is the apportionment process whereby congressional district boundaries are adjusted every 10 years after results are released from the constitutionally mandated U.S. Census. Both political parties are guilty of gerrymandering - or intentionally creating congressional districts that are either heavily Democratic or Republican. These new districts often resemble snakes, salamanders, butterflies and octopuses to zone certain voters in, and out, of districts.

Both parties are in cahoots with gerrymandering. How do we get rid of these back room deals? We need more transparency in the process, so our citizens know what's going on. I recently introduced the "Redistricting Transparency Act of 2011" (H.R. 419) to allow the public to see and criticize the redistricting process. I've supported this legislation in previous Congresses regardless of which party controls the Tennessee state legislature. It's time to end this corrupt practice so districts are designed to make sense and are fair to all voters.

The Knoxville News Sentinel recently endorsed this bill saying it would "allow for greater public scrutiny of the process, which would be a service to residents whose lives will be affected by redistricting for the next decade."

Cutting Government Waste

In February, I joined with Congressmen Aaron Schock (R-IL), Mike Quigley (D-IL), and Joe Walsh (R-IL) to introduce a bill to eliminate wasteful government programs.

The Federal Program Sunset Commission Act (H.R. 606) creates a bipartisan commission comprised of Members of the House and Senate, as well as outside experts, to help abolish duplicative, unnecessary, or inefficient programs.

The Concord Coalition said that this bill is a "fiscally responsible step that could eliminate waste, reduce spending and help restore public trust in government." The Bipartisan Policy Center calls it a "commendable act of bipartisan collaboration" that should be used as part of a "bipartisan and comprehensive effort" to "address our fiscal imbalance." The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget says it is a "good start towards government reform."

Earmarks

For years, I have refused to request earmarks for special spending projects. I applaud both the House and Senate for banning earmarks for FY2012. Eliminating earmarks is only a small percentage of our nation's fiscal problems, but I believe ending this process is a good start to changing the attitude in Washington.

Cleaning Up Electric Co-Ops

I have also worked to clean up electrical cooperatives. Member-owned, not-for-profit utilities initiated during the New Deal to bring electricity to rural areas, co-ops are supposed to return excess revenue to customers. Although many operate correctly, over time, numerous other co-ops have become inefficient, wasteful and are sitting on millions of dollars in capital credits. In 2008, I published an article in the Harvard Journal of Legislation called "Electric Co-operatives: From New Deal to Bad Deal."

Latest News and Updates

March 9, 2011 · Cooper Discusses Financial Report at Congressional Hearing

February 10, 2011 · Cooper Introduces Bipartisan Legislation to Cut Government Waste

January 31, 2011 · Editorial:
Redistricting Transparency Would Benefit All

January 27, 2011 · Speech on "Fixing Congress"

January 26, 2011 · Cooper,
Shuler Work to Stop Gerrymandering

January 4, 2011 · House
Democrats Ask: Where's the Open and Fair Process?

November 18,
2010 · Cooper
Talks Deficit Crisis and Earmarks Reform

November 15, 2010 · Cooper
on Earmarks Ban

April 21, 2010 · Cooper,
Tanner Work to Stop Gerrymandering

April 15, 2010 · Cooper
Introduces Simple Return Act

March 10, 2010 · Cooper
Praises Appropriations Committee for Banning For-Profit Earmarks

February 28, 2010 · Tennessean
Op-Ed: Only Winner is Public that Got to See Process

April 2009 · Cooper:
No Earmarks for FY 2010

September 2008 · Cooper
IG Reform Bill Passes Congress, Awaits President's Signature

June 2008 · Subpoened
Witnesses Evade House Oversight Committee